

Food Assistance

Mission

To eliminate hunger and malnutrition for low-income families in Indiana by way of food pantries, public meal providers, and the food stamp program.

Summary of Activities

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is operated contractually with 12 Distributing Recipient Agencies across Indiana. These organizations contract with approximately 410 food pantries, 754 soup kitchens, and 53 combination food pantries and soup kitchens. The soup kitchens and food pantries serve 219,387 meals and 59,096 households each month.

Indiana orders food commodities on a quarterly basis through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA products are valued at approximately \$8.2 million and include fruits, juices, cereals, grains, meat, and vegetables. Indiana TEFAP pantries also provide paper products, cleaning supplies, health products, diapers, baby food, and other items for household use. There is at least one food pantry in every Indiana county. Volunteers maintain and operate the pantries. The income guideline for eligibility is 150% of the federal poverty level and Indiana uses a self-declaration certificate to determine eligibility.



The food stamp program is designed to raise the nutritional level of low-income households by supplementing their available food purchasing dollars with food stamp benefits. The Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family and Children (DFC) offices in each county determine eligibility for food stamp benefits. The federal government through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service, establishes the guidelines for the food stamp program. However, the DFC has sought and obtained waivers designed to tailor the program to better meet the needs of Indiana residents and to establish financial and non-financial eligibility requirements as well as monthly benefit levels. The federal government funds 100% of the benefits and 50% of the administrative costs.

During the past year, Indiana's food stamp participation has increased by nearly 18% to approximately 208,000 families. These families receive an average monthly benefit of \$204, or \$86 per person. In addition to these benefits, job training and nutrition education programs are available to food stamp recipients. Some food stamp clients also receive supportive service payments such as transportation and child care while in food stamp work programs.

External Factors

TEFAP is primarily dependent on the volunteer force to dispense a choice of all food and non-food items. It is estimated that 10,000 volunteers are needed to operate TEFAP. The volunteers are continually trained to be kind and non-judgmental toward program participants. This can be very difficult in rural areas and small communities where the number of volunteers are small and everyone in the community knows each other.

The food stamp program is subject to ongoing policy and rule revisions by the USDA, which often result in additional state costs for hiring and training staff, software development, and the printing of forms and notices. Because food stamps are an entitlement under federal law, the DFC must process and provide benefits to all eligible families according to federal guidelines.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

Indiana has experienced significant growth in TEFAP. The state has gone from a statewide one-day distribution with cheese as the only product to pantries with extensive product choices available to clients. Educators with the food nutrition program that are based in county extension offices throughout the state have strived to provide cooking demonstrations and one-on-one cooking, food safety, and housekeeping skills.

Recent research indicates that food stamp participation rate is dropping faster than the poverty rate. This has led to the conclusion that many eligible food stamp recipients are not utilizing the program and are therefore experiencing “food insecurity.” To address this problem, the DFC held public meetings to identify barriers to participation and designed a food stamp education plan for low-income families and senior citizens. As a result of this and other initiatives, an increase of 3% to 5% in the number of eligible families is expected in the 2004-2005 biennium.

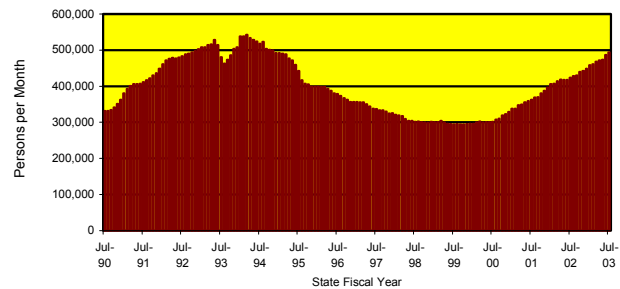
In a few short years the food stamp program in Indiana has increased payment accuracy from less than 85% to nearly 94%. Increased training and attention to program improvements has led to national recognition of the DFC as a leader in food stamp administration. Next year’s goal is an error rate of less than 5%.

Plans for the Biennium

The Emergency Food Assistance Program of Indiana continues to work on a system that will relieve food insecurity for Indiana individuals and families. Indiana continues to enhance the cooperation among food banks, Community Action Agencies, faith-based organizations, and other local service providers in the delivery of USDA food products and non-USDA food and non-food items.

With the increased need for food and non-food items in the outlets, Indiana will continue to expand and make changes that will augment the program in the next Biennium. These changes may include the elimination of very small outlets across Indiana, which will allow remaining emergency food organizations to provide more extensive and comprehensive services to their clients.

Food Stamp Program Caseloads
Persons Served per Month, SFY 1991 to SFY 2003

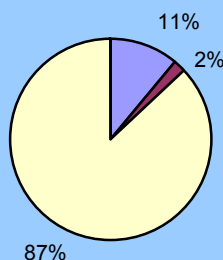


Program: 0310

	Actual FY 2001	Actual FY 2002	Estimate FY 2003	Appropriation FY 2004	Appropriation FY 2005
(All Funds)	\$295,855,559	\$316,631,291	\$326,255,804	\$331,030,393	\$330,841,849

Sources of Funds FY 2004 (Approp)

General Dedicated Federal Other



Uses of Funds FY 2004 (Approp)

Personal Services Distributions Capital Other

